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Idaho State Department of Education

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NEXT GENERATION ASSESSMENT EXAMPLES NOW AVAILABLE STATEWIDE

BOISE — Students across Idaho now have access to sample test questions for grades 3–8 and 11 in both English language arts/literacy and mathematics, similar to questions students will see in the new assessment they will take beginning in Spring 2015.

Idaho is transitioning to higher academic standards, known as the Idaho Core Standards, in English language arts/literacy and mathematics next school year. Students will first be measured against these higher academic standards in Spring 2015.

“The Practice Tests are another tool we are able to provide parents, teachers and students in the coming years as we transition to higher academic standards in mathematics and English language arts,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna said. “In Idaho, we face a significant challenge. While we have one of the highest graduation rates in the United States, we rank nearly last in the nation when it comes to the number of students who pursue education after high school, which we know is critical to succeed in the workforce of today. With these higher academic standards and a robust assessment to measure students against these standards, we can now ensure every Idaho student who graduates from high school is prepared with the skills and knowledge they will need to be successful in life after high school.”

Idaho is a governing state in a state-led effort to develop the next generation of assessments that will replace the ISAT and better measure students’ academic progress every year. Through the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, Idaho is collaborating with more than 20 other states to develop a year-end assessment as well as assessment tools teachers can use in the classroom throughout the school year to monitor student progress. The new year-end test will include multiple choice questions as well as open-ended questions that require students to solve complex problems, utilize technology, and show their work.

While the first test will not be administered to students until Spring 2015, the Practice Tests are available online and available for anyone. Teachers can access these example questions to incorporate in lesson plans or upcoming professional development opportunities. Parents can take a look and better understand what students will be expected to know and be able to do at the end of each grade level, and students can experience the features of this new test and how it might differ from the ISAT.

The Practice Tests are freely available on the Smarter Balanced website: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/practice-test/>. To access the tests by grade level, click on the “Explore the Smarter Balanced Practice Tests” link in the middle of the page and then click on the box titled “Student Interface Practice Tests.” From there, click “sign in” and explore the example test items by grade level.

(Please note: the Practice Tests are not currently available for viewing on Internet Explorer. They are available on most other browsers, including Firefox, Safari, and Google Chrome.)

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The Practice Tests include questions with the same features that students will experience in the 2014-15 school year. The test system also includes an initial set of accessibility tools for all students and accommodations—such as Braille—for those who need them.

The tests provide a preview of the Smarter Balanced assessments, but they do not reflect the full range of content that students may encounter on the operational assessments. In addition, students and teachers will not receive reports or scores from the Practice Tests.

As a governing state in Smarter Balanced, Idaho plays a key role in the development of these next-generation assessments. More than 100 educators from Idaho have participated in the development and review of assessment items, achievement level descriptors, and test specifications since 2011.

The release of online Practice Tests demonstrates that the work of the state-led consortium is on track and moving forward. In May, Smarter Balanced concluded a Pilot Test of the assessment system in 21 Governing States. About 120 schools across Idaho participated in this scientific pilot earlier this year.

To view the Practice Tests, please visit <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/practice-test/>. For more information on Idaho's work to raise academic standards, please visit <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/ICS/>.

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About the Idaho Core Standards

Idaho voluntarily chose to adopt the Common Core State Standards as Idaho's new Core Standards in English language arts and Mathematics in 2011. The Common Core State Standards were developed in 2009 through a voluntary, state-led effort in which states took the lead to develop these new academic standards that are higher, more in depth, and comparable with any other country in the world. The standards were published in 2010. Idaho held more than 20 public meetings across the state to get feedback on the standards. Idaho teachers reviewed the standards and conducted a gap analysis comparing Idaho's previous standards to the new standards. The State Board of Education reviewed the standards, held a public comment period, and approved them in November 2010. The House and Senate Education Committees of the Idaho Legislature gave final approval of the standards in 2011. Idaho schools have been working to implement these standards two years.